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Glenwillow goes elsewhere for fire protection

By SUE REID

For the first time since the 1970s, the Village of Glenwillow will not obtain fire service through the Solon Fire Department.

Glenwillow Mayor Mark Cegelka said Tuesday that Village Council approved an ordinance to accept the proposal from Oakwood Village, effective Jan. 1. Oakwood also provides emergency medical service for Glenwillow.

Mr. Cegelka said the change is based upon Solon terminating the current agreement with the Glenwillow in October in order to raise the price.

Solon Mayor Susan A. Drucker said at the time that the agreement must be equitable for both parties.

The city exercising the termination clause "led us to look at other sources, as well as to see what would be best for the Village of Glenwillow," Mr. Cegelka said. Oakwood was offering a 15-year contract with no cancellation clauses, he said. At the most, Solon would offer a five-year contract, he said, and wanted a cancellation clause.

"When we talked about it with our council and looked over the Oakwood proposal, we decided 15 years with no cancellation clause and the service they would provide would be the best for the village," Mr. Cegelka said.

The contract with Oakwood would have a base fee of \$200,000, Mr. Cegelka said, and there is an escalator of 2 percent. Solon's proposal had a base fee plus a per-call fee for emergency medical service and for fire.

"When we looked at our past experience with rescue squad runs and fire calls, and if we had the same experience going forward, we would have been well over \$200,000, plus they had the cancellation clause," Mr. Cegelka said.

Mrs. Drucker said Tuesday that she respects the decision. "It was a phenomenal service Solon was offering to Glenwillow," she said. She's glad she pursued changing the contract, she said. "They were getting a good deal from Solon," she said.

Mrs. Drucker said she could not go beyond five years with a contract. "You don't know where expenses will lead into the future," she said. "I have to make sure we are making fiscally sound decisions for the City of Solon first and foremost."

The latest contract between Glenwillow and Solon had a 5 percent increase each year. It began in 2005, with the village paying Solon \$60,000 annually for fire and emergency medical service. In 2010, that amount was \$76,272 for the services.

Mr. Cegelka said his village was happy with the service Solon provided. "They provided a great service to us, and we look forward to Oakwood providing the same great service they did in the past," he said. "We were with Oakwood before Solon, and we were happy with their service."

Prior to the 2005 contract, which basically gave Solon an exclusive contract with the village, Solon provided the fire service, and Oakwood Village provided emergency medical service. That was part of an enterprise-zone agreement between the two communities, which had been in existence since at least the 1970s.

"We enjoyed serving the residents of Glenwillow," Solon Fire Chief William J. Shaw said. "We gave them a high level of service and we wish them well in their future."

Mr. Shaw said the change does not have a huge effect on Solon, as the city's responses to Glenwillow represented about 3.5 percent of the total calls in 2009.